

Education Governance Responses
Randolph Meeting (5/2/07) - Union High School Cafeteria

23 Attendees (facilitated by George Appenzeller)

Question #1: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the present education governance system in your community?:

Advantages

Local needs and preferences –more responsive
Close relationship school admin, staff, parents, communities
Local board knows personalities, history, circumstances
Doesn't prevent sharing across local districts
Community feels connected to local school (UHS not as much)
Encourages local school to take initiatives/responsibility
Helps to build community
Decisions happen more often at school level
How do we not lose what we value?
Immediacy of access to super
Already have quality education
Local control, more advocates for education
Individual schools act as community centers
Number of people involved in boards/schools
Relationship between board and super
Local control, ownership of schools...budget, program decisions, connection to boards and principals
Community relationships

Disadvantages

More difficult/complicated to share across districts
Contracting complexities
Some SU's better able to collaborate than others
Demand on time (board and supt.)
Doesn't focus on students K-12 (curriculum)
Principals can't be leader for school in education (not admin)
Limited pool to sit on local board
Duplication of efforts
Lack of role clarity – multiple bosses
Complexity
Costs of separate maintenance, transportation personnel
Too much time spent by superintendent at meetings
District make up not cohesive in operation
Hard to find good people
Admin time in different school board meetings
Time/resources required to build trust across schools/relationship/collaboration
Duplicate admin functions
Strat. coordination and planning

Wasted resources....vol hrs, supt's time, policies duplicated, etc
Inefficiencies and inequities
Grey areas in control, communications

Question #2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of the school district model suggested by Commissioner Cate in his White Paper?

Advantages

See disadvantages 1 and 2 above in reverse
Reverse current disadvantages
Better chance for board members ready to govern well
Efficient
Protect infrastructure – spread around ups and downs over a bigger pool/population
Enlarges the community....more local control from strength of numbers
Name new district that reflects all towns
Administrative time
Strategic planning and coord. across school
Single admin functions (payroll, AP GL etc)
Human resource
Economy of scale
Flexibilities students, programs, staff
Efficiencies..supt's time, transp coord, supplies, etc.
Communication
Budget – just 1
May save dollars

Disadvantages

See advantages above 1-4 in reverse
Additional disadvantage – shape of unions not workable
Reverse of current advantages
Closing of local schools in future – w/o community vote
Weighting of votes dangerous
Would board be able to look out for all schools equitably
Work required to maintain contact with local community
Control vested too much in 1 person
Principals removed from local decision making
Possible “homogenization” of schools, program
More demands on school board members

Is there flexibility for number of board members or one per district with weighted vote?
Is weighting by number of voters or number of kids per town?

Debrief Comments:

Seek volunteer supervisory unions for pilot program
Rework system, why start with a system that is “not functioning”
Leadership from DOE and legislature no way to get agreement among 284 districts, therefore
need leadership at state level
Don't want to see ‘mass’ consolidation of supervisory unions

This is not about cost savings but needs to focus on how to best serve kids
We need to increase ed spending not always look to cutting costs
Would have liked to learn about other possible models, first
Need to look first at impact on students and families
Would system improve accountability for student results
Any system ought to maximize admin's ability to focus on educational issues (as opposed to management)
Alternatives to weighted voting ..enlarge board to weighted board, 5-9 members ideal, revisit as population changes
Some SU's may need 2 boards ...K-6, 7-12 maybe such a thing as too big
Or break into 2 k-12 systems (don't be held to current SU boundaries)
What happens to tech centers?
Regardless of system Commissioner Cate needs to re-evaluate system of cost drivers (student: teacher ratio – not looking deep enough)
Establish best practices at state. ...DOE level to support districtsevaluation supt/others, procurement
Carefully consider the map; lines may be different from the current map
Governance cannot solve a problem not related to governance
Would have been great to learn from districts that have already done it (the Cate model)
In change, it is important to hold onto what we value
Be clear about what we “do well”....
The discussion should be about kids not money as the driver
Unclear about the goals of the white paperwhat is the goal, and how will it be achieved?
To above – it is about cost
The study should evolve, not be done quickly – evolution not revolution – timeframe should not be rushed
Without the goal, it is difficult to have a useful process. Need to define the outcome. Need to develop leaders.
The need for change is driven by leadership issues; i.e. superintendents turnover, etc – the goal is not cost cutting
It is about cost too. We are centralizing schools. This is bigger than education; the school = community.
We can figure out how to work together